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ABSTRACT

This ERIC Digest examines: (1) the meaning of the term "Pacific Rim"; (2) reasons for emphasizing the Pacific Rim in the social studies curriculum; and (3) useful strategies for teaching about this part of the world. The terms, Pacific Rim and Pacific Basin, are used. interchangeably; however, the "Rim" refers to those nations bordering the Pacific Ocean, while "Basin" includes all the island nations. Due to unprecedented growth in trade and finance, many of the Pacific Rim nations are achieving increasing global significance. Three reasons for including the Asian Pacific Rim in elementary and secondary schools social studies curriculum are: (1) economic interdependence of the United States with countries of the Pacific Rim; (2) military and political importance of the Pacific Rim; and (3) growing rates of immigration from the Asian Pacific countries to the United States. Useful strategies for teaching about the Pacific Rim include emphasizing the diversity of Pacific Rim cultures and using studies of modernization and change in Pacific societies to provide insights into global change. The study of Asian Pacific culture not only enhances understanding of these people but also fosters a sense of appreciation for social diversity found in the United States. A list of resources is included. (SM)

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At the turn of the century, then Secretary of State John Hay declared that the Mediterranean was the "ocean" of the past, the Atlantic the ocean of the present, and the Pacific the ocean of the future. The Pacific future is imminent. We hear daily reports of increased trade, immigration, and cultural exchange with Pacific Rim nations, especially those in the Asian sector.

Focusing attention on this Pacific phenomenon is often a challenging task for educators in the United States. To a large extent, the United States has spent the last 200 years looking across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. We have been historically drawn there by ethnic and cultural heritages, political ties, and economic needs. However, the time has come to attend to the Pacific Rim. This ERIC Digest examines (1) the meaning of the term *Pacific Rim*, (2) reasons for emphasizing the Pacific Rim in the social studies curriculum, and (3) useful strategies for teaching about this part of the world.

What is the Meaning of the Term *Pacific Rim*? Gradually, the terms *Pacific Rim* and *Pacific Basin* have become part of our daily political and economic parlance. Although used interchangeably, "Rim" refers to those nations bordering on the Pacific while "Basin" includes all the island nations. Specifically, the nations of the Asian Pacific include China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Asian NICs (Industrialized Countries, of Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) and the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand.

These nations of the Pacific Rim have taken on increased global significance. Many of these countries are experiencing unprecedented growth in trade, finance, energy resource exploration, and migration. In the United States, we find examples of our connection to these changes in the foods we eat, articles we buy, children we teach, and changes in transportation and communications. Although the term *Pacific Rim* encompasses all the nations on the edge of the Pacific, this Digest will focus on the Asian sector, where the United States finds its most perplexing challenges.

Why Should the Pacific Rim Be Emphasized in the Social Studies Curriculum? There are three main reasons for emphasizing content on the Asian Pacific Rim in the social studies curriculum of elementary and secondary schools:

- Economic interdependence of the United States with countries of the Pacific Rim.
- Military and political importance of the Pacific Rim.
- Growing rates of immigration from the Asian Pacific Rim to the United States.

Economic Interdependence. In 1977, the United States trade balance shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Statistics for the period 1970 - 1982 show United States trade with major West European countries increased fourfold; trade with Pacific Rim countries averaged an eightfold increase during the same twelve-year period. Contrary to the trade surpluses of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s signalled a period of alarming trade deficits for the United States. This was particularly true with Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. The United States trade deficit with Japan alone stood at $59 billion in 1986.

These trade figures have caused many in the United States to call for protectionist legislation. Some blame the Pacific Rim countries for American unemployment and point to unfair trade barriers. Economic interactions with Pacific Rim countries, however, are increasingly complex, attesting to our growing interdependence with their economies.

The terms *import* and *export* no longer retain their standard definitions in the face of global manufacturing, assembling, and originating patterns. Many United States firms have operations based in the Pacific Rim, while nations such as Korea and Japan continue to open plants in the United States.

Economic interactions are multiplying in the world of finance. While Americans sleep, the dollar continues to be exchanged around the world. It appears corn, soybeans, and porkbellies will now have this same 24-hour vitality, since futures trading currently accommodates Pacific traders with sessions opening at 7:30 p.m. in Chicago. Surplus Pacific trade funds are being channeled back to the United States through the sale of United States Treasury notes. Japan now holds notes on over $52 billion of the United States debt. In addition, nine leading Japanese banks have purchased $130 million in notes to rebuild Bank America's capital base.

Clearly then, economic interactions across the Pacific form an intricate matrix that promises to grow even more complex. Introducing students to this global reality can help prepare them for life in the 21st century.

Military and Political Importance of the Region. The U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. carefully monitor each other's actions and bases in the Pacific. The Soviets now have their first warm water port in the Pacific at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. Soviet ships on their way to Cam Ranh Bay from Vladivostok must pass through narrow straits guarded by South Korea, Japan, and the United States. Currently, the United States Pacific fleet accounts for almost half of the United States naval strength.

Japan is a staunch ally of the United States in the Pacific. There are 50,000 United States troops stationed in Japan with the Japanese spending $1.7 billion a year for their maintenance. Although relations with the government of the Philippines are strong, there

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is concern over present United States bases. These bases, housing an American force of 16,000, will be reviewed in 1988 and expire in 1991. Opposition to these bases and general political unrest in the Philippines have raised questions over their future.

The United States has fostered good political relations with many nations of the Asian Pacific by playing a role in their economic development. The United States has contributed technology, capital, and equipment while purchasing their manufactured goods. Free enterprise has worked to a large extent in the Asian Pacific, and capitalists there have a stake in maintaining non-communist governments.

The American presence in the Pacific has raised questions about nuclear power. In 1985, New Zealand would not permit the *U.S.S. Buchanan* to visit because the Americans refused to state whether or not the ship was carrying nuclear weapons. The United States government has a long-standing policy of neither confirming nor denying such requests for information. Compliance with this request would have set a precedent and perhaps jeopardized United States bases in other countries. In August 1986, the United States suspended its military commitment to defend New Zealand under the ANZUS pact.

Immigration from the Asian Pacific Rim. Interconnections across the Pacific include the flow of capital, goods, cultural forms, and people. The flow of people among Asian nations and between these countries and the United States has dramatically accelerated. For example, in 1965 only 7% of immigrants to the United States came from Asia in contrast to 44% in 1981. There are currently 5.2 million Asian Americans in the United States, and by the year 2000 there will be about 10 million.

The influx of Asian immigrants challenges teachers trying to cope with a wide variety of behaviors and learning styles. For example, in a typical American classroom casting down one's eyes might be viewed as disinterest or disrespect. Yet, in some Asian cultures it is a deferential gesture, appropriate for a superior, such as a teacher.

What are Useful Strategies for Teaching About the Pacific Rim? Emphasize the realities of social change. Jiro Tokuyama points out in *Whole Pacific Catalog* that, "History's biggest changes are generally hardest to perceive. The Egyptians in the ancient times were not aware of the emerging Phoenicians, who, engrossed in commerce and trade, paid little attention to the rise of the Greeks and Romans, who in turn were ignorant of the Portuguese and the Spanish on the Iberian Peninsula." Tokuyama continues: "The Spanish did not realize the potential power of Great Britain, which was not far-sighted enough to see the United States taking shape in the tobacco and cotton fields on the new continent. This lesson of history teaches us to open our eyes to the changes taking place right before us in the Pacific."

The study of ethics can provide clues to Asian cultures. Too often a discussion of the Pacific Rim revolves around economic issues rather than societal values. Frank Gibney, President of the Pacific Basin Institute, argues that it is a mistake to cast the whole relationship in terms of business. For example, he urges us not to simply copy Japanese styles of management but to understand the Confucian and Buddhist cultures that have been the foundation of these skills. Comparing these values, and their relationship to the work force, provides an opportunity for American students to question their own patterns of behavior and examine societies that are organized quite differently.

Use studies of modernization and change in Pacific societies to provide insights into global change. Today there are historical as well as temporal time zones in the Pacific, with nations in various stages of technological development. According to Gibney, the hallmarks of the Pacific Basin that have evolved over the past twenty-five years are the transistor, semi-conductors, television, and the jet aircraft. These changes have propelled some countries on a course of modernization and in some cases, Westernization, that few could have predicted. Studying these changes is especially critical for American students facing a future with high-level technology and fast-paced change.

Emphasize the diversity of Pacific Rim cultures. For example, various religions are practiced: Buddhism, Shintoism, Islam, Christianity, and others. Lifestyles range from the highly urbanized experiences of Tokyo, Singapore, and Hong Kong to rural communities without running water or other modern conveniences. Numerous languages prevail in this area. Point out the difference in temporal perspectives. In the United States, there is great value placed on the present, on quick returns, and on a relatively short attention span. The longer histories and cultural traditions of many Asian countries foster a longer range view and longer attention span. Delayed gratification and long-range planning are norms fostered through religious and social practices.

The study of Asian Pacific practices different from our own can not only enhance our understanding of the people but also can foster a sense of appreciation for diversity found in the social diversity of the United States.

Reference and ERIC Resources

Following is a list of resources, including references used to prepare the Digest. Those items followed by an ED number are in the ERIC system and are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, write EDRS, 3900 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22304. Entries followed by an EJ number are annotated monthly in CIJE (Current Index to Journals in Education) which is available in libraries containing ERIC collections. EJ documents are not available through EDRS; however, they can be located in the journal section of most libraries using the bibliographic information provided below.

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